

Beane Valley Nativity



The wisemen set off from Benington. The journey would be long and hard. The lanes were treacherous at this time of year. Flooding was an ever-present threat, the mud underfoot slippery. Good wellies and a stout walking stick to help with balance were necessary. A hat, scarf and gloves gave some protection from the freezing wind and rain. In the dark one could easily lose one's way. One of the wisemen had a map, another a compass and the third, a small flask of brandy. The latter for purely medicinal purposes - including keeping the chill out of the bones. Wisemen indeed.

The Shepherds set off from Ardeley – Wood End to be precise. Like the sheep in the fields around, they were well wrapped in woollen fabric. Heavy overcoats to keep out the elements. They make people tough in this part of the world. Plain speaking and straight-forward, the Shepherds agreed to cut across the fields, following the tracks made by deer and badger. An owl hooted as they set off and could occasionally be heard all along their journey.

A star appeared above Cottered. Both wisemen and shepherds noticed its rising in the northeast. There were pilgrims, from Throcking, heading south down the valley, and though the light from the star was sometimes shrouded in the cloud (and the rain), its light was sufficient to guide them across the stiles and over the footbridge that crossed the winterbourne.

Eventually, the wisemen, and the shepherds, and the pilgrims, all gathered in Walkern. The star seemed to settle over the White Lion pub where there was much jollification taking place. A new family had recently moved into the village – a young couple with a baby. Everyone was celebrating the new arrival. One shepherd offered a woollen shawl as a gift for the baby. *“New life brings hope, and hope keeps us warm,”* he said, smiling at the young mum as she wrapped her baby in its new comfort blanket.

“The best thing about this time of year,” said Harry, one of the wisemen, *“is that it brings us all together. It might only be once a year but look here, we’ve got people from all the villages around.”* *“God works in wonderful and mysterious ways,”* said an elderly lady from Throcking. *“And there’s nothing like a brand-new baby to remind us all that life goes on despite everything else going on in the world.”*

“Let’s toast the new baby,” said Dave, the publican. *“Here’s to new life, new hope and our all being together.”* And everyone gave a hearty shout, *“Cheers!”*

Happy Christmas

God Bless.

Revd Mark Bailey